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NEAR EASTERN CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The Arab and Moslem World:
Studies and Problems

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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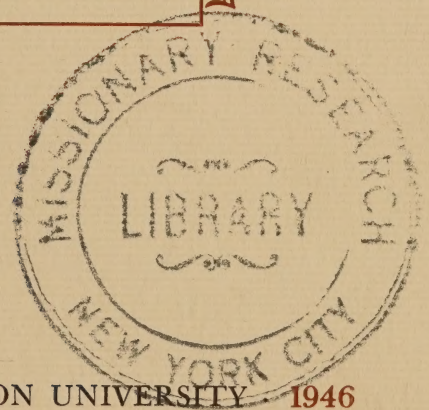

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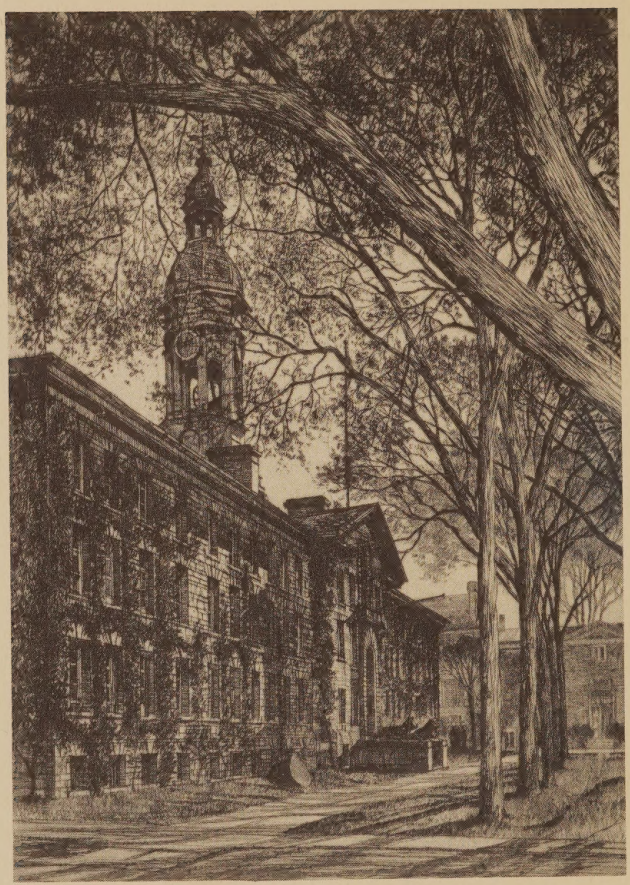

NASSAU HALL

The Princeton University Bicentennial Conference on Near Eastern Culture and Society

The Arab and Moslem World: Studies and Problems

FOREWORD

ARABIC and Islamic studies, hitherto much neglected in American universities, have become important as a result of recent events which have reduced the dimensions of the globe. Islamic countries, which in 1939 could be reached only after long and tedious journeys, are now as close in terms of travel time as the more distant parts of North America. Political, economic and military developments have made us neighbors of the Moslem peoples, neighbors with common interests and common problems. But we are inadequately prepared to deal intelligently with these interests and problems, largely because in the past we paid too little attention to the study of Islamic languages, history and culture.

Princeton was the first American university to recognize the importance of these studies and to accord them their rightful place in its undergraduate curriculum. Its program of Near East studies, to be inaugurated in the fall of 1947, will provide for both graduate and undergraduate students the opportunity to investigate Islamic culture through the media of the languages, literatures, histories and religion of the Moslem peoples. Those studies are here accepted as constituting a field of concentration within the general framework of a liberal arts education preparing the student for life in the second half of the twentieth century. It was, therefore, most appropriate for Princeton to include in its Bicentennial conferences one on the Near East.

The theme throughout the three-day sessions was new approaches in research—research in Islamic art and archeology,

in literary, religious and scientific thought, and in national and international relationships that bind the Arab and Moslem peoples together and hold them to the rest of the world, especially Western Europe and the United States. In order to do justice to the theme, it was, of course, necessary to review the scholarly achievements already accomplished. In order to plan for the future it was necessary to revaluate the past. But throughout the discussions the future trends in thinking and investigation were repeatedly emphasized and the question was constantly raised: where do we go from here?

The participants in the conference included educators from Lebanon and Syria, scientists from Turkey and Egypt, scholars from Iran and 'Iraq, diplomats from Washington, professors from the United States and Canada, graduate students from Princeton—all contributing to and sharing in what has been described as a "unique experience," a "stimulating and memorable event."

If as a result of this conference fresh and determined attempts are made to push back the curtain that separates the known from the unknown in Oriental studies and to bring the peoples of the West and of the East closer together, the efforts of those who organized the meeting will be amply rewarded—and the tricentennial of Princeton will have a different story to tell.

PHILIP K. HITTI
Director of the Conference

April 25, 1947

SUMMARY

Art

No university in America at present maintains a chair in Islamic art or archeology. In fact, this study throughout the world is still in its infancy. Practically all the scholarly literature on this subject which is of any use today has been written during the last forty years.

The main task of these forty years has been to gather information about the dates and provenance of monuments and objects, to discover their prototypes and to reveal their relationships. The chief concern of the student has thus far been the identification of the physical qualities of Islamic art. This work is far from being complete. We shall still need a long period of further investigation to acquaint us fully with the physical character of already known monuments and objects as well as of those to be discovered. To this end it is essential that some of the rich storehouses of the East be opened up more fully and investigated. In Istanbul alone there are believed to be 124,000 manuscripts, many of which are unknown to us and some of which may contain miniatures of great importance. The changed political situation in the Near East has put the study of Islamic art in these countries —be it above or below the ground—on a new basis. An enlightened policy for the furtherance of these studies can do much to promote intercultural cooperation.

While in the past the main task has been to survey buildings and objects with a view to establishing their physical character, the main task of the future, in the words of Richard Ettinghausen of the Freer Gallery of Art, "will be to place them in their true historical perspective." Not satisfied with having established the dates of structures or implements and the names of artists and patrons, we should endeavor to see the objects of our study as reflections of their times, their world of thought and the material conditions under which they were produced. After all, the artist of any period is but a living being influenced by age-old traditions and by contemporary trends. Religion, magic, astrology, literature,

popular legend—all shape his mind and artistic expression. Thus the political and social conditions of his time and country leave their impress on his work. The supply of raw materials, the opportunities to sell and the competition of other craftsmen, domestic and foreign, enter into the picture. These and many other factors form the world of the artist; all of them should be considered if a full understanding of the significance of art objects is sought.

Slides were shown to illustrate the complexity of the elements involved in the development of decorative motifs. One of those motifs related to mosque lamps. In early mosques a glass lamp was suspended by chains in the *miḥrāb* (prayer niche). From references in the Koran and al-Ghazzali's treatises, the lamp is known to represent the Divine Light. In later mosques the lamp was converted into a vase. By that time Islam had lost its theological fervor and the artist was merely decorating a surface. The vase was then represented as full of flowers. Subsequently the space between the chains was filled by a floral decoration in relief or in colored tiles without showing a vestige of either lamp or chains.

In his comments Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, elaborated on the meaning of Persian iconography in terms of Persian thought. To these people iconography was on the whole ideological, sometimes mythical or supernatural. To a considerable extent it is the supernatural type that survives in what we have been apt to think of as a purely "decorative" Persian art. It would be unreasonable to suppose that in the illustrations in the Persian books of poetry, of which the content is rarely secular, what was presented to the eye had none of the meaning of what was presented to the ear. This would also apply to the pictures of Laila and Majnun and those of the books of fables. The subjects of book illustrations are in fact sometimes referred to by mystical poets in the symbolic sense. Jalal-al-Din al-Rumi, for example, calls those blind who do not see the hidden meaning of the story of the hare and the elephant in *Kalīlah va-Dimnah*. This mystic philosopher never tires of repeating

that the outer form is for the sake of the inner form, not an end in itself. He asks:

> Does a painter paint a beautiful picture for the picture's own sake, or with some beneficent end in view? Does any potter make a pot for the sake of a pot, or with a view to the water? Does any calligrapher write so well for the sake of the writing itself, or to be read? There are many degrees of understanding, like the rungs of a ladder, the first for the sake of the second and so on. . . . One can, indeed, use a book as a pillow, but the true end of a book is the knowledge it contains.

In his references to works of art the Persian has always in mind the analogy between the human artist and the Divine Artist. The external form (*naqsh*) is for the sake of the unseen form. This is well illustrated in the glazier's art. Every Moslem knows the koranic verses (24:35):

> Allah is the light of heavens and earth. The likeness of this light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass, and the glass is like a brightly shining star. This lamp is kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, of which the oil would well-nigh burn even if untouched by fire. Light upon light. Allah guideth unto His light whom He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is knower of all things.

The second commentator, Mehmet Aga-Oglu of New York City, stressed compartmentalism as a barrier to the true understanding of Islamic art. This art, it was contended, should be treated as a part of medieval Oriental art and even as a part of the art of the medieval world in general. Hitherto the student in this field has to a certain extent neglected the principles of historical research as laid down by students of Western art. He has likewise neglected the literary sources without which no such study could be considered complete.

This plea for closer collaboration between the student of art, the literary man and other scholars in cognate fields was endorsed by the conference.

Archeology

Islamic archeology, like Islamic art, has not yet developed its technics and firmly established itself as a discipline. It also needs support and collaboration from workers in affiliated fields. Its study should be comparative and critical. Its architectural representatives are the house, the palace, the mosque, the school and the fortification.

Keppel A. C. Creswell of King Fouad I University showed with the aid of slides that the Syrian type of dwelling house was linked up with the Ghassanid as represented at Qastal, in Transjordan, whereas the 'Iraqi type was related to the Sasanid of Persia, and the Egyptian to the 'Iraqi. The ninth to eleventh century houses of Fustat (Old Cairo) follow models which were introduced by ibn-Tulun from Samarra in 'Iraq. The Tulunid dynasty was followed after a short lapse of time by the Fatimid. The theory of Persian influence on Fatimid architecture can now be proved to be a fallacy as regards the form of the arch, the pendentives, the fluted dome and the composition of the *mihrāb*. Now that we have a series of examples of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in Persia, 'Iraq, Syria and Egypt, it is possible to see that the Egyptian type is different from the others and developed along independent lines. The Persian *mihrāb* has an inner arched frame within a larger arched frame, a feature which never occurs in Egypt.

The Umayyad desert palaces had structures attached to them called *hairs*. These were game enclosures or gardens. Theophanes uses for them the correct technical term *paradeisos* (a Greek form of some early Persian word which first appears in Xenophon's *Anabasis*). The first *hair* was built by the Caliph Hisham in 729.

In the art of fortification it was shown that the Arabs were ahead of the Westerners as regards the bent entrance (*bāshūrah*) which first appears in the gateways of the city of Baghdad in 764, and the machicolation (*saqqāṭah*), the first Moslem example of which appears in Qasr al-Hair al-Sharqi (729) but which was known in Syria before Islam. The bent entrance was not known to the Byzantines until the ninth

century. The machicolation does not appear in England and France till the twelfth century.

In the comments and discussion that ensued it was pointed out that, while there are in Iran and 'Iraq several sites that have been continuously occupied from early times until the present, there are others which are now completely or virtually abandoned. The fact of their being unencumbered by modern occupation is an important consideration of a practical nature for the archeologist. The evidence of the Arab-Sasanid and the early reformed Arab coinage, as was pointed out by George C. Miles of the American Numismatic Society, furnished us with many valuable clues to the identity of the earliest important administrative towns in the significant period of transition from Sasanid to Arab rule in the eastern provinces of the caliphate.

Among the sites suggested for future excavation the following stood out: in Syria, Jabal Says (classical Usays, east of Damascus) a desert resort of the Umayyad Caliph al-Walid, and al-Hair al-Sharqi (forty miles east of Palmyra); in Transjordan Qastal (north of Ziza); in 'Iraq *dār al-imārah* (government palace) in Wasit and in al-Kufah; in Tunis al-Mahdiyah, which may reveal the plan of the first Fatimid palace ever built. It was agreed with Donald N. Wilber of the School of Asiatic Studies that in all future excavations and studies Western authorities should encourage younger students resident in the several Moslem countries and collaborate with them.

Science

From the domain of art the conference moved on to that of science.

Teachers in our scientific departments cannot be expected to know Arabic and instructors in Arabic usually know very little about science. Even the professional historian of science can hardly be expected to do justice to the Arabic branch of his field. This leaves an important section of human knowledge in no man's land, and this in spite of the fact that it constitutes one of the most important features of Arabic culture.

"One may speak of the miracle of Arabic culture," declared George Sarton of Harvard University, "as one speaks of the miracle of Greek culture, the meaning of the word being the same in both cases. What happened was so extraordinary that there is no way of accounting for it in rational terms." What was true of Arabic culture in general was equally true of its scientific component in particular. There is nothing comparable to the birth and rapid development of Arabic science in the whole history of the world unless it be the Japanese assimilation of modern science and technology during the Meiji era. The intellectual leaders of the Arabs realized their urgent need of Greek science just as the Japanese of two generations ago realized their need of European science.

But the Arabs were not mere imitators or transmitters. In mathematics and astronomy their two greatest innovations were the new arithmetic and the new trigonometry. In this field they did not copy the Greek or Sanskrit sources. A scientific invention, be it remembered, is simply "the weaving together of separate threads and the tying of new knots." Nor should the value of transmission be underestimated. Between the Greek science of the past and the Latin science of the future there was no way except by the Arabic channel. Arabic men of science were late epigoni of their Greek models while the early Latin scientists were the younger contemporaries of their Arabic colleagues. Many of the Greek books thus transmitted were lost in the original and exist today only in Arabic translations. The hope of finding more Greek originals is very small, but there is much hope of finding Arabic translations of them. Arabic manuscripts constitute at present a most promising means for the improvement of our knowledge of Greek scientific literature.

After the fourteenth century Arabic science declined rapidly. Contempt for medieval science, the very core of which was Arabic, was an error of the youthful Renaissance. In our time a revaluation of Arabic science in itself and in its relation to the West has become necessary.

Arabic scientific books and manuscripts are so abundant

that the task seems immense. Much remains to be done. In hunting for these manuscripts the tools are the catalogs of the great collections in some eighty cities of the world. The pioneers in the compilation of these catalogs were all Maronite Lebanese who inventoried the wealth of Arabic manuscripts i the Italian, French and Spanish libraries. A partial catalog of the Princeton collection, the largest in the New World, has been published by Princeton scholars.

As commentator, Franz Rosenthal of Hebrew Union College, brought out that in the past the emphasis has largely been placed upon discovering what modern ideas and inventions the medieval Moslems "already knew"—a procedure that is unrewarding in itself and unworthy of the importance of the subject. Our future task should be to evaluate the contributions of Moslem scientists in terms of their own civilization and then to integrate those contributions in the over-all picture of the development of man's scientific thought. For this purpose the highly desirable collaboration of the Arabist with the scientist may not always be sufficient. The classicist and the historian of science must also contribute to the elucidation of the philological and ideological processes which determined the character of the work of the Moslem scientist.

In the discussion H. A. R. Gibb of Oxford University raised the question as to why Arabic science was not integrated into Islamic thought. By way of answer it was stated that there was an integrating science, namely theology. This was a characteristic not only of Islam but of the Christian medieval world. The scientific work of the Arabs was continued from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century by the Turks but even during the golden age of the Ottoman Empire its science and philosophy were but feeble reflections of the earlier achievements. The modern scientific method did not develop in Europe until the seventeenth century, and the experimental phase of it did not become firmly established until the early nineteenth. The Islamic world remained ignorant of these developments until a half century ago.

A practical suggestion was made that a movement be set on

foot to produce a library of Arabic texts and translations comparable to the Loeb Classical Library.

Language and Literature

In the session on language and literature not much time was wasted on the obvious need for additional publication of texts critically edited and for monographic study of individual authors and genres. The literature of any people, it was declared, is an expression of the life of that people cast into literary forms. It follows that while the form elements must be studied carefully, the underlying religious, social and psychological impulses must be understood first.

A study of the history of Arabic literature, Gustave E. von Grunebaum of the University of Chicago asserted, will have to start from an investigation of:

1. The position of literary products within the framework of Arab, or rather of Moslem, civilization;
2. The basic demands on, or expectations regarding, literature—for instance, originality and thematic range;
3. Arabic literary theory and its relation to literary practice;
4. Arab criticism, its motivation and effects.

Such investigation, while preliminary to a proper study of the history of literature, is called for on its own merits and should be conducted with due regard to historical development. It should be undertaken in the light of the various traditions, such as the early Arabic, Persian and classical, that have gone into the making of the Arab literary mind. Historically independent traditions, such as those of the European Renaissance and baroque eras that are for one reason or another akin in outlook and purpose to the tradition of the Arab Middle Ages, should also be studied for parallels that may help us to understand apparent contradictions in the literary values of the medieval Arab and to furnish additional tools for an adequate interpretation and assessment of his achievement.

The conceptual frame of reference in each Arab period, according to this speaker, will present the most potent key to success or failure of its literary aspirations. The position assigned imagination or the creative faculty of man as such, in other words the fundamental hypothesis of contemporary psychology or philosophy, will determine to a large extent the rank and scope of literary work in a given age and will be decisive factors in preparing or preventing literary revivals. The peculiar sensibilities of each period require tracing as a primary element in the selection of its favorite subject matter and means of self-expression. The study of the over-all relation of the literary to the political and the socio-economical development of the time will account for the direction of certain changes in both purpose and style of writing. For instance, the rise of the scribe (*kātib*) as the most potent instrument of the change-over from the patrimonial to the rational Abbasid state was accompanied by the rise of a new literary outlook, the development being paralleled in certain respects by the function and viewpoints of the European humanist. The literary men who in the early Abbasid period began to staff the government offices gave style and ornateness to official documents.

At about the same time the Arabs made their translations from Greek and Persian. But whereas in Europe the Renaissance was unending in time, the renascence in the Arab world was short lived. The return to traditionalism was certain and quick; this was reflected in the literary output. Writers continued tooling to the old patterns and motifs. Reason became subject to tradition. Only mysticism was able to rise above tradition, and it did this in its own peculiar style, based on an optimistic view of man's imaginative, creative capacity.

Arab writers never developed a theory of beauty. We find no trace in their writings of esthetics as an independent science. On the whole the enjoyment of beauty was determined by the Aristotelian concept of form as distinct from content. The view was mechanistic; beauty was something added from outside by a technician. Poetry illustrates this view. The poetry of the ninth and tenth centuries shaped the poetical

compositions of the following centuries. Down to the present time there has been no marked deviation from this pattern.

Ilse Lichtenstadter of the School of Asiatic Studies commented that in our research on early Moslem poetry and prose we seem to have reached an impasse. Though it was early recognized that classical Arabic poetry employs a highly refined and formalized style, obviously the result of long development, no systematic attempt has yet been made to discover remnants of earlier stages in this process. Publication of additional manuscripts may bring to light creations of earlier periods, but so far nothing essentially new has emerged. Therefore we must turn in other directions. Search should be conducted within the Semitic realm of which the Arabs formed an integral part. For, basically, Arabic literature is but a continuation of ancient Semitic literature. In the early love poems (*nasīb*) are many parallels to certain elements in the Song of Solomon and in old Egyptian erotic compositions. The ultimate source should be sought in ancient cult hymns and religious expressions. In other early cultures there is a close connection between religion and the rise of poetry.

We must also turn to archeology to enrich our understanding of ancient Arabia since our literary possessions do not provide us with sufficient material to gain an insight into the complexity of pagan Arab thinking. Without archeological exploration of Arabia, especially North and Central Arabia, we shall not be able to discover the roots of Arabian thought.

Solomon L. Skoss of Dropsie College took up the question from the standpoint of Judaeo-Arabic literature. While in this literature, particularly of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries, many important texts are still awaiting publication, the great need at present is for a thorough study of the linguistic characteristics of this genre as a whole and of its authors in particular. For their style and linguistic usages often deviate from the accepted usages of the classical idiom. The Judaeo-Arabic dialect abounds in Hebraisms and Aramaicisms.

In the discussion the need for developing modern scientific methods in the teaching of Arabic as a language was brought out. Antiquated methods prevail everywhere. The new peda-

gogical technics are hardly ever used and the situation is aggravated by lack of implementation. At present there is no good or even "half-good" book for introducing the American student to the intricacies of the Arabic language. The student of modern Turkish is not quite so badly off.

Religious Literature

As a new approach to the study of Arabic religious literature it was proposed by Edwin E. Calverley of the Hartford Seminary Foundation that modern personal attitudes should be adopted by both Orientalists and Orientals. These attitudes include objective standards of judgment based on full liberty of conscience for the individual, devotion to universal principles and ideals and appreciation of truth and goodness wherever found. In the past such attitudes have characterized Western students of non-religious subjects and university teachers of courses on the history of religion. But these attitudes are not generally applied in theological studies in sectarian educational institutions and are almost entirely unknown in religious institutions in the Near East.

Cooperative study of a theological subject or book by two students, one from the West and the other from the Orient, was suggested as a means to attain the desired aim; joint responsibility and credit for editing and publishing the studies would increase their value. This sharing of sound training in scholarly method should produce reliable and satisfying results and tend to unify the cultures of the East and West.

By way of implementation it was proposed that manuscripts in Eastern public and private libraries, without being removed from their present ownership, can be copied on the spot and made available for students everywhere. It was also suggested that use be made of the Arabic translation of the *Encyclopaedia of Islām* as a dictionary for the technical meanings of words which are not given in any of the bilingual lexicons. An international bibliographical society to record all current and future publications of Arabic and other Middle Eastern literature should be organized.

William Thomson of Harvard University conceded the desirability of cooperation between Western and Eastern scholars but observed that its possibilities are limited especially in matters of interpretation. The interpretation of religious movements and the development of religious thought is bound to remain the task and duty of the individual scholar. In religious study there is no objective truth; that remains an individual matter. Nor is it enough to interpret Islam on the basis of Arabic religious literature only. One must include Syriac, Greek and Talmudic study. On the whole, it was observed, the materials are less scarce than the scholars.

One Arabic book was singled out for an elaborate critical edition. This was the Koran. The suggestion was made by E. P. Arbez of the Catholic University of America. A scholarly edition with cross references, adequate commentary, linguistic and historical notes and other critical apparatus would prove a boon to the student of Islam.

At this point it was remarked that of equal value perhaps would be a critical edition of the books of *hadīth* (sayings of the Prophet). The advantages of having at our disposal some kind of a register of the libraries of the cities of the Near East was stressed. The conference was told that the printed card service of the Library of Congress was now available for Arabic, Turkish and Persian books. It was agreed that bibliographical work was primarily a library rather than a university function.

Cultural and Political Problems

The approach to these problems was made through consideration of the interaction of Islamic and Western thought, viewed both in retrospect and in prospect. The Ottoman Empire included the Arab lands in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the impact of modern European ideas and technics began to be felt in the Near East; so the sketch of Turkish intellectual history given by Abdulhak Adnan Adıvar, editor of the *Turkish Encyclopedia of Islām*, provided an appropriate starting point.

I Turkey

In Turkey during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, he stated, Islamic thought of the traditional medieval type was paramount in the domain of science and philosophy. As in the rest of the Moslem world the mosque schools (*medresés*) were the chief centers of Islamic life. However, in the second half of the fifteenth century the conqueror of Constantinople, Mehmed II, made the first attempt to synthesize Western and Islamic thought. His efforts had no permanent success and traditional Moslem medievalism reasserted itself, dominating the scene until the eighteenth century.

The introduction of printing in the third decade of that century and the publication of translations of European books opened the way for the adoption of Western ideas. Meantime there was the realization that Western military technics were far ahead of Ottoman practice. In the last decade of the century fresh ideas came from Revolutionary France. These were reflected in the reform (*tanẓīmāt*), but a basic conflict soon became apparent; for democratic principles and practices dangerous to the traditional Islamic monarchy were imported along with elements which the Empire could assimilate. Schools, journals and newspapers of Western types spread concepts of social equality and nationalism which were incompatible with the autocratic and theocratic rule of the Ottoman sultans and led to the revolution of 1908.

Henceforth the penetration of Western ideas and practices was vastly accelerated. With the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 and the abolition of the caliphate, laic principles replaced those of authoritative Islam and positivism became the new officially approved doctrine. But the critical spirit and the freedom of discussion essential to real interaction of Western and Islamic thought were no more possible under an authoritative republic than under an absolutist sultan. Consequently no true mingling of the two streams has taken place. The state, fearing that encouragement of Islamic thought might lead to religious reaction en-

dangering the Republic, has thus far taken no steps to further the fundamental modernization of Islam. Yet there are indications that the leaders of the Republic now realize the desirability of creating the free intellectual atmosphere in which Moslem thinkers might rework the philosophy of this religion and adapt it to the modern age. While the Republic seems to be moving in this direction it must be expected to insist on maintaining the laic character of the state.

The history of science proves, commented Professor Sarton, that theological totalitarianism jeopardizes and finally stops the development of science. It was the growth of Islamic bigotry and intolerance that was the main cause of the decline and fall of Arabic science. This is easy to understand; the theologian who knows the whole truth and knows that he knows it can have no patience whatsoever with the man of science who is always searching for the truth, never satisfied with the amount of truth already available to him, always anxious to purify and improve it, always ready to throw out the statements which have been proved to be wrong.

Professor Gibb remarked that the Turks have always been characterized by vigor and adaptability. In the course of their history they frequently moved from place to place, established contacts with other peoples, adopted freely from their culture and embraced with enthusiasm whatever they adopted. In the nineteenth century, almost the only modernist Moslems were Turks. But Abd-al-Hamid and the wars of the early twentieth century blocked their progress. When they adopted Western ideas in the twentieth century, they did so with much more seriousness of purpose than either Egyptians or Arabs.

The discussion showed that from the standpoint of the impact of the West the Turks represent one liberal extreme, the Arabians of the peninsula the other and conservative extreme and the rest of the Arab World the mean between the two. With a view to protecting and preserving their time-honored traditions and institutions the Arabians in the last century or so tightened the already established cordon around their

territory, isolating and insulating themselves. But the Turks broke sharply with the past and adopted Western methods on an unprecedented scale. The Egyptians, Syrians, Lebanese and 'Iraqis took the middle course; they insisted on choosing certain elements from the Western culture, preserving certain features of their heritage and attempting to reconcile the two. Some speakers maintained that the choice in the Arab lands was more apparent than real and that in the long run not much can stand against the onslaught of Western technics and ideology.

II Iran

The consequences of the impact of the West on the East were somewhat different in Iran. There, according to T. Cuyler Young of the University of Toronto, Islamic thought dominated Persian culture until the end of the eighteenth century; although it must be remembered that Shi'ite Persians have ever been heretical in esthetic and philosophic expression. During the entire period the *madrasah* and *maktab* (mosque schools) were the dominant educational agencies in a feudal society and a medieval culture.

During the nineteenth century, coincident with the political and economic pressures exerted by the rival imperialisms of Czarist Russia and Great Britain, Western technics and thought began to make themselves felt. Western schools pioneered the way and stimulated similar establishments by natives, chief of which was the *Dār al-Funūn*—an academy of arts and sciences patterned after Western models. This was founded after the middle of the century. Increasing use of the printing press during this century contributed to the infiltration of Western ideas.

Generally in response to this influence, but specifically by way of resistance to the threatened Kajar surrender of the nation to European imperialism, arose the nationalistic and constitutional movements at the turn of the century, culminating in the basic reforms of 1905-06, confirmed by the triumph of these forces in 1909. These movements lost

ground before continued foreign interference and the violation of Persian neutrality during World War I, and suffered near-paralysis when the postwar leadership appeared prepared to surrender national sovereignty to the British.

The war, however, with its contending armies and improvements of communication accelerated the growth of Western influence. This was expressed mainly in a revival of nationalism and an emphasis on secularization. Nationalism was both a positive and negative response to the West, the latter leading to xenophobia in the years prior to World War II. Secularization did not gain momentum until after 1925 and Riza Shah Pahlavi's consolidation of power. Clerical reaction to radical Turkish reforms retarded this laic movement; it also contributed to Riza Shah's coronation, contributing thereby to the eclipse of constitutionalism and democratization.

As the Pahlavi reforms were accelerated it became increasingly clear that Central European totalitarianism rather than Western European democracy constituted their inspiration and pattern. Soviet communism was opposed on all scores and fronts, but did not fail to attract a number of young men.

The allied occupation of 1941-46 brought a realignment of Western influences in Iran. Reassertive individualism has been trying to attain democratic expression and cooperation. Deflated nationalism has been endeavoring to re-establish itself within an important vortex of the global power struggles. Secularization has remained dominant in governing and urban circles, but elsewhere clerical influence has been resurgent. Communism has spread, championing the cause of democracy and exploiting widespread social unrest, but is presently in eclipse after a serious over-play of its hand.

Host to the armies of the Big Three for several years and a present test of the ability of these powers to cooperate for peace in this strategic area, Iran is now a focus of intersecting interests and influences. The future Iranian reaction depends upon the establishment of true Iranian independence, a workable balance of major power interests, and the advance attained in political and economic reform. In a situation

characterized by delicate balance and dynamic flux prediction is difficult.

A fundamental fact noted by J. Christy Wilson of Princeton Theological Seminary is the ability, proved over and over again in the course of history, of the culture of Iran to conquer her conqueror. From the remains of prehistoric times we trace in the pottery the incursions of new cultures and new peoples. They unite with the distinctive Iranian rudimentary civilization to form a new pattern adapted to the environment and combining the various cultural streams into the Iranian artistic and cultural tradition. When we come to the Achaemenid period we find the remains of Persepolis presenting a distinctive architecture which was molded by and yet which had absorbed the influences of Assyria and Egypt.

With the conquest of Alexander, Greek culture was deliberately imported; Alexander himself hoped to combine the best from the West and East. He founded cities everywhere in what is now Iran and even in areas farther east. Many elements of Greek civilization entered the stream of Persian culture; yet it finally maintained its distinctiveness. The Parthian dynasty remained under strong Greek influence; but when the Sasanid rulers came in, distinctly Iranian elements again were able to gain the upper hand.

In the Islamic period Iran suffered from the invasion of Saljuqs and Mongols; yet in a very short time these conquerors fell under the spell of her art and literature. The mosque in Iran evolved from elements present in Sasanid buildings some four hundred years prior to the time of Muhammad.

In all of this we should bear in mind the Persian national characteristic of accepting outwardly outside influences, but with mental reservations and even on many occasions with intentional dissimulation.

M. Hessaby of the University of Teheran stressed the role which Iranians educated in the West played in the movement against autocracy which culminated in the revolt of 1909. Today even sermons preached in mosques are replete with facts and ideas drawn from Western sources.

III The Arab Lands

Interaction between Islamic and Western thought in Arab countries antedates interaction in Iran. Historically as well as currently the impact of the one on the other, observed Habib A. Kurani of the Office of International Information and Cultural Relations, Department of State, has been accompanied by a psychology of conflict coupled with an attempt on the part of the aggressive culture to dominate the other, and conversely, with an effort on the part of the less aggressive to defend itself. It is this psychology which has determined the elements of civilization which one group has selected for adoption and assimilation from the other group. It should, however, be remembered that there can be no revival of the Arab world without a revival of Islam and that this cannot be effected directly by forces external to itself. It must come from within through more concentrated efforts to make the religion of the Arabs a system of thought capable of satisfying the reflective and inquiring mind of the rising generation. To accomplish this two measures are necessary:

1. More intensive concern with medieval Moslem philosophy in an effort to harmonize it with modern thought;
2. A deeper understanding not only of the material external aspects of Western civilization but of its spiritual and philosophical mainsprings. To this end a greater, not lesser, exposure to Western thought is essential.

An examination of the interaction between Arab-Moslem and Western Christian thought and civilization raises the following fundamental questions:

1. Does the essence of Islam and Christianity, both of which constitute the spiritual and moral bases of Arab and Western cultures respectively, have sufficient elements in common to permit of a wide area for harmonious relations and cooperation between the two civilizations? What are the basic similarities and basic differences between Arab Moslem thought and Western Christian thought?

2. Does Arab Islamic culture permit of a spiritual content of civilization which submits to the tests of free inquiry? Does

it possess that inner vitality to render Islam capable of meeting the demands of the modern mind?

3. To what extent are nationalism and secularization compatible with Islam?

4. What are some of the most important changes which must be introduced into the "Westernized" system of education now prevalent in some countries of the Near East in order to make them at once harmonious with Islamic tradition and Western civilization?

5. During the past decade a definite reaction in Arab lands against the West and Western liberal thought has been in evidence. Is this trend a manifestation of a permanent conflict or a reflection of some transient phase of Arab mentality?

The answer to these pertinent questions, asserted Afif I. Tannous of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, Department of Agriculture, is beset by two serious difficulties. The first is the scantiness and unreliability of available historical data on this process of cultural interaction. The second is the lack of the rigorously defined framework of basic concepts which is essential for a scientific approach to the problem. Unless we have the necessary factual information, no prediction of the future course of interaction between the two cultures is possible. Nevertheless, one might venture the following remark:

So extensive has been the exchange of elements in the process of interaction that the two ways of life seem to have at present a great deal in common. All evidence points to a continuation rather than a disruption of the process of exchange. A few basic steps could be taken to accelerate the process. These involve greater effort in cultural research, educational campaigns stressing the contributions of one culture to the other, a radical change in the Western attitude of cultural superiority, and a complete departure by the West from its course of political-economic imperialism.

Emile Zaidan, editor of *al-Hilāl*, Cairo, declared that in Egypt the general trend has been for the last century or so toward Westernization and modernization in all spheres of life. Since the beginning of the present century that trend has

been accelerated. Egypt is now a country with a constitutional king and a parliament. Many boys and girls are being educated on the Western pattern. A few decades ago women were veiled and rarely mixed with men; now the veil has almost disappeared. Girls mix freely with boys and attend the same courses in law, medicine, literature, science and even agriculture and engineering.

Egyptian nationalism follows the European pattern. The extreme forms it sometimes takes are the result of extreme forms of imperialism and exploitation. During the sixty-five years of British occupation the standard of life of the fellah has been lowered, or at least has not changed, and today the literate population does not exceed twenty per cent of the total.

Together with nationalism secularization is making marked progress. Civil penal codes are modeled on Western, mainly French, patterns, and are no longer based on Islamic law. Even the students of al-Azhar now study physics and chemistry, engage in games and entertain a new outlook on life. One danger has been eloquently pointed out by the great Lebanese thinker Gibran: "We Orientals are now taking what Occidentals offer us. We swallow it without discrimination, and rarely assimilate it properly. This tends to make of Orientals cheap copies of Occidentals—which situation is full of danger to us and shows the East either as an old man who has lost his teeth or as a child who has not grown them yet."

The discussion brought out a wide divergence of views. Some argued that the gulf between East and West has been overstressed, that the real issue was not between East and West but between medieval and modern. Others maintained that the West itself has not yet assimilated its own civilization and is far from being an integrated entity. Still others held that what Easterners choose from Western culture is determined more by Westerners than by Easterners. There was no assurance as to the kind of response the Arab mind would make to the trend of industrialization which brings with it a governmental tendency to participate in the management of industry. Nor was there an explanation of the alleged fact that in the Arab lands the necessary vigor is limited to the

youth, and that on the older level of age it is usually replaced by cynicism. The general opinion seemed to have been that whether the next decades will witness a growth of understanding between Arabs and Westerners depends upon the extent to which the Westerners are willing to recognize, practically as well as theoretically, the Arab people on a basis of true equality and also upon the readiness of the Arabs to adopt and establish practices which the West can accept and with which it can cooperate.

The Arab Peoples in their National and International Relationship

From the problems of interaction between Near Eastern and Western societies the conference moved on to those of nationalism and internationalism as they affect the Arab world. Nationalism, be it remembered, is one of the most dynamic forces passed on from the West to the East. The leader of this discussion was Costi K. Zurayk, minister of Syria to the United States and Professor at the American University of Beirut.

The objective sought by the Arab peoples at the present time is threefold: complete independence, unity and progress in its economic, social and cultural aspects. The fight the Arabs are waging is on three fronts. They are trying to free their lands from foreign control and interference. They are seeking to strengthen the ties among themselves; the Arab League is the expression of the unity that their states have thus far been able to achieve. Moreover they are endeavoring to raise their economic, social and cultural standards. These three aims are not separate; they overlap and interact. The struggle for independence strengthens the urge for unity; the unity achieved drives, in its turn, toward fuller independence; both are helped by, and help, the march of progress.

The extent of the success of the Arabs in achieving this threefold objective depends upon two different factors: the course of modern civilization and their own ability. In a world ruled by power politics, the speaker continued, there is really no hope for them or for any other people, large or

small. It is only on a basis of some sound international organization that the Arabs, and other peoples, can work for a better life. So the fate of this people is, on the one hand, a challenge to the positive and constructive forces in Western civilization and to its power to prevail over the forces of destruction inherent in it, and, on the other hand, a challenge to themselves—to the kind of leadership they can evolve, to their consciousness of moral values and to the faith with which they are ready to promote what is right, and fight what is wrong in the world around them as well as in themselves.

Thus the "Arab problem"—for there is such a problem—is ultimately a human one. In the last analysis it is not so much the problem of certain states and of their relationship as the problem of modern man as a whole, and of a particular expression of him: the modern Arab.

The Arab nations have banded together, commented Cyrus Gordon of Dropsie College, so that their common aims might be served more effectively; but it is evident that all these nations have not enough power to emancipate themselves from Western interference. Their salvation must come from a league larger than any Arab federation. The Pan-Islamic ideal of Jamal-al-Din al-Afghani remains as cogent today as when he propounded it over a century ago. Arabs, Turks, Iranians—indeed all Moslems—still have to win complete emancipation, and they had best compose their differences to reach the common goal. There is a basis for Pan-Islamic cooperation; it is the active sympathy among Moslems from the East Indies to Morocco for any of their brethren struggling for freedom. The basis for unity is there; all that is needed is to consolidate and transform it into action. The freedom that the Near Easterners want (and must have if they are to become healthy nations) is one without limitations imposed for the benefit of any outside power.

But the Arab peoples are closely circumscribed in a number of respects, commented Halford L. Hoskins of the Middle East Institute and School of Advanced International Study. Even should they succeed in developing the Arab League into something resembling a modern state, they will still face ma-

jor problems in an attempt to realize their hope of becoming an independent and influential people. Four points should be borne in mind:—

1. They do not possess the natural resources requisite for extensive industrial development.
2. They occupy areas large portions of which must remain arid; hence the Arab population must remain relatively small with reference to certain non-Arab peoples, such as the Indians.
3. The areas they occupy are not homogeneous and are very much exposed.
4. These areas lie in a zone of strategic concern to other peoples, and in one way or another the Arabs inevitably will be subjected to external pressures.

These circumstances, however, are not necessarily adverse. The Arabs lack means which they may the more readily acquire as other nations become interested in them. They have possible advantages in oil resources alone. Foreign interest will not necessarily be a disruptive influence. It does call for an extraordinary amount of good sense on the part of Arab leaders. They will have to be masters of diplomacy and avoid entangling alliances while they strive to escape exploitation or subjugation. Their independence will be relative, but with care they can achieve a considerable measure of independence of action, a much higher standard of living, the basis for a recrudescence of Arab culture and an important place in the international scheme and they may become a powerful factor for peace.

In the discussion several questions were raised as to whether Asiatic unity was incompatible with local unity, whether the expansion of the United States will be for domination or cooperation and whether the difficulty of understanding between peoples was not due more to inability to discover the values in each other's culture, than to a disdain for those values. If the West itself does not fully understand and appreciate the values in its own culture, how can the East be expected to comprehend those values? The

UNESCO is finding that a culture cannot easily define its values even for itself.

The Arab Moslem World in Its Relation to the United States of America

The last session, unlike the earlier ones which were held at the Princeton Inn, was held in the Graduate College. It followed a dinner in which President Dodds brought the greetings and welcome of the University to the members. The session was led by Charles Malik, Minister from Lebanon to the United States and Professor at the American University of Beirut, whose inquiry was primarily directed into the mind and spirit of the Arab man, into the Arab being itself.

A genuine ontological analysis of Moslem Arab existence reveals the following phenomena: masses, *badu*, discontinuous society and history, weakness of the authority of reason. The literature of this being is of highly imaginative character, with over-emphasis on words and rhyme. In the interpretation of events, magic, luck, fatalism and mysticism play a part. The tradition of rebels and reformers is thin. There is ignorance of the authentic Christian doctrine and life, together with repudiation of any concept of value in suffering. The Arab being is outside the Greco-Roman-Hebrew-Christian European synthesis.

This being is partly the result of centuries of foreign domination. Today its possibilities are great; there is nothing that inherently prevents the Arab from endless progress. But such progress presupposes an antecedent fearless self-criticism.

The impact of the West, America included, on this being has not helped to bring out its structure. It was for the most part commercial and political. Nationalism, democracy and modernism were copied from the West but did not transform life and being. The historicism of the Orientalist and the self-lost romanticism of Lawrence confirmed Moslem Arab existence in itself. There is a ripple of influence from Darwin and Bergson, but the latter's subjectivism did not help the Arab man out of his own subjectivism. French literary estheticism strengthened the innate tendency toward ornate form.

From all this externalism no genuine inner criticism resulted.

There is at present, the speaker went on to say, a real socio-economic challenge of Russia. But the West maintains an attitude of embarrassment and external relatedness. It does not rouse and question; it does not care; it offers sheer form without content; it uses the Moslem Arab world as a means only.

The persistence of the ultimate problematic of the Moslem Arab world is the surest sign of the crisis of the Western world. This problematic will be faced and solved only when the West faces and resolves its own crisis, specifically when America and England rediscover the unity and continuity of the European tradition in such a way as to reaffirm, in theory and act, the threefold Aristotelian truth that being is not a genus, that actuality is prior to potentiality and that being is ordered and hierarchical. Moreover, the Arab society must undergo a profound change in its mind and spirit not only by reconstituting itself with respect to the challenges of the day, but by critically rediscovering the great positive traditions of its own classical philosophers, scientists, theologians and mystics.

Three circumstances can be of great help: the activity of the American educational institutions in the Near East, provided they rise to what is spiritually and intellectually required of them; the translation into Arabic of the world's classics; and the strengthening of Lebanon as a center of freedom of thought and conscience in which man can seek, see and proclaim the truth in complete freedom.

In his commentary William Ernest Hocking of Harvard University raised a question as to whether the unity of the Arab world was primarily artificial or natural. Is it a response to external pressures or an expression of an inner life? Obviously the pressures are there, economic, political and national, and any vigorous community would respond by finding a corresponding unity of its own organized interests. But such a response, if it were the main function of the union, would be of the same nature as the pressure: it would be economic self-assertion, political self-will, and national self-definition and self-preservation. The Arab world would then be

summoning itself to meet the West in Western terms and with all the glories and defeats of Western conceptions. But all this is a response, not an inner demand. If, however, the inner demand is there, the response becomes not imitation but self-recovery. The reality of this inner demand in the case of the Arab people is evidence. It is deeper than nationalism, and because of its reality and power the new national life of this region, whatever form it may take, will be a living thing and will have a real message for the world. The question will not be whether the Arab peoples can build battleships, develop an industrial focus, establish research laboratories, create a chain of air routes, have a network of coeducational colleges and a standing army. These things will arrive, as far as they are demanded by the genius of the Arab people, in the relation to the outer world and no farther. The question will be: "What has Arab thought and feeling to say about this boasted modernity?" The Arabs no doubt have something to say. It will not be a shower of compliments and conformities and we shall find it worthwhile to listen.

No one who has entered the Arab world of today can have failed to note two things: the suffering of spirit which comes of the historic crisis, with its demand for change, and the extraordinary freshness and vitality of the spirit of this great people. That vitality will use the social and industrial technics which it finds most pertinent to its life. Like China, it will have impulses from the Soviet type of organization and from our own; and like China it will not take them as ideological opposites, with an either-or requirement, but will create its own synthesis if it is allowed to do so. While we talk of the "dignity of man," let us remember that here in the Arab world, in spite of a hundred obstacles, the dignity and poetry of the human spirit reaches a new height.

In his comments John A. Wilson of the University of Chicago noted that in our study and discussion of the problems of interaction and relationship we have been concerned more with the impact of the West on the East and less with that of the East on the West. We should remember that every action has an equal and opposite reaction and that no culture can

transmit its essence to another. One of the most effective ways by which the East can interact on the West would be through the development of departments of Oriental studies in American universities, whereby the student, undergraduate and graduate, would be able to specialize in the languages and area of the Near East.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Morning session:	*ART AND ARCHEOLOGY*
Subject:	ISLAMIC ART: NEW APPROACHES IN RESEARCH
Chairman:	Maurice S. Dimand
Leader:	Richard Ettinghausen
Commentators:	Ananda K. Coomaraswamy
	Mehmet Aga-Oglu
Afternoon Session:	*LITERATURE AND RELIGION*
Subject:	ARABIC SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE: NEW APPROACHES IN RESEARCH
Chairman:	G. Levi Della Vida
Leader:	George Sarton
Commentators:	Franz Rosenthal
	Abdulhak Adnan Adıvar
Evening session:	*CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS*
Subject:	INTERACTION OF ISLAMIC AND WESTERN THOUGHT IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT: TURKEY
Chairman:	G. Levi Della Vida
Leader:	Abdulhak Adnan Adıvar
Commentators:	H. A. R. Gibb
	George Sarton

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

Morning session:	*ART AND ARCHEOLOGY*
Subject:	ISLAMIC ARCHEOLOGY: NEW APPROACHES IN RESEARCH
Chairman:	M. S. Dimand
Leader:	K. A. C. Creswell
Commentators:	Donald N. Wilber
	George C. Miles
Afternoon Session:	*LITERATURE AND RELIGION*
Subject:	ARABIC RELIGIOUS LITERATURE: NEW APPROACHES IN RESEARCH
Chairman:	J. Christy Wilson
Leader:	Edwin E. Calverley

Commentators:	E. P. Arbez William Thomson
Evening session:	*CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS*
Subject:	INTERACTION OF ISLAMIC AND WESTERN THOUGHT IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT: IRAN
Chairman:	William S. Haas
Leader:	T. Cuyler Young
Commentators:	J. Christy Wilson M. Hessaby
Radio Broadcast:	NBC Network *"Report on the Near East"*
Speakers:	Emile Zaidan *Moderator*: John A. Wilson Charles Malik Walter L. Wright, Jr.
Radio Broadcast:	WPEN, Philadelphia *"Political Problems in the Near East"*
Speakers:	Matta Akrawi Ananda K. Coomaraswamy Jibra'il Jabbur
Radio Broadcast:	WAAT, Newark Interview with Edward J. Jurji

THURSDAY, MARCH 27

Morning session:	*LITERATURE AND RELIGION*
Subject:	ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE: NEW APPROACHES IN RESEARCH
Chairman:	William Thomson
Leader:	Gustave E. von Grunebaum
Commentators:	Solomon L. Skoss Ilse Lichtenstadter
Afternoon Session:	*CULTURAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS*
Subject:	INTERACTION OF ISLAMIC AND WESTERN THOUGHT IN RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT: THE ARAB WORLD
Chairman:	W. E. Hocking
Leader:	Habib A. Kurani

Commentators:	Afif I. Tannous Emile Zaidan
Afternoon Session:	*RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS*
Subject:	THE ARAB PEOPLES IN THEIR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIP
Chairman:	G. Howland Shaw
Leader:	Costi K. Zurayk
Commentators:	Cyrus Gordon Halford E. Hoskins
Evening session:	*RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS*
Subject:	THE ARAB MOSLEM WORLD IN ITS RELATION TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Chairman:	G. Howland Shaw
Leader:	Charles Malik
Commentators:	W. E. Hocking John A. Wilson
Radio Broadcast:	WCBS and CBS Networks, *"Can East Meet West?"*
Speakers:	Costi K. Zurayk Philip K. Hitti

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